

erica gray

Garden Vista's, Curious Critters, Fancy Rugs And Other Eclectic Things

July 30 – August 13 2022

The canvases in the exhibition explore my daydreams of home and garden. Exotic wildlife visitors are set amidst both tranquil garden vistas and the incongruity of soft furnishings, lavish wallpapers and parquet floors that furbish domestic spaces.

For a long time, our Gold Coast house was just a place to inhabit and produce work but with the advent of the pandemic it became a secluded bolt-hole tucked away from external worldly woes. Fortunately for me, escapism transpired in the form of imaginary realms and the activity of art-making.

Looking out to my garden with its brightly coloured flowering shrubs, I have now come to realise that these outdoor spaces intrinsically interplay with and positively enhance my perception of a comfort zone. The Garden, the Patio and the natural world's Creatures have inspired a re-evaluation of the notion of Home, from inside out and from outside in.



Over the past years, given the seeming permanence of being confined to one's house, I have worked hard at visually creating more uplifting interior habitats. Dark furnishings were painted a lighter shade, hard-toned upholstery converted to soft and the outdoors embraced by including tropical animals and birds into the depicted scenarios. Merely utilitarian spaces of 'existence' were transformed into harmonious 'living' areas – places of relaxation and calm, peppered throughout with my real and imagined eclectic treasures.

Our actual Garden is a mess – an unkept jungle of sorts with a lot of happy inhabitants. It has good bones; an orange Tulip Tree, red Hibiscus shrubs, Bird of Paradise plants and yes, also a lot of weeds. My mind wanders imagining how it could be... or should I rephrase, 'I have visualised what it would be'.

Nature, I've noticed, has been creeping ever closer to our homely thresholds. Echidnas have been seen at the curb, deer in the parks, frogmouth owls and other exotic wild birds in urban Gardens. I love the thought of 'brave beasts' edging into nature-alienated spaces such as shopping centre atria and factory belfries. I wonder just how close could nature's footprint envelop these places of often over-industrialised, over-polluted, over-noised and over-peopled environments?

My works aspire to thread together the narrative of life, joy, whimsy, calmness and ultimately, a sense of place and home. The painterly process towards pictorial outcomes unfolds in a largely intuitive way. Layers of multi-hued acrylic paint and decorative patterns evince my musings and reveries. I hope that my imagery's interplay of unusual visual relationships ushers the viewer beyond everyday concerns and into a heightened aesthetic and transcendent domain.

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